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ABSTRACT

There has been a growing but begrudging recognition that better teacher education is necessary both to carry out other education-related reforms and to provide knowledge for shaping the reform agenda. Without fundamental changes in the ways that teachers teach, changes will not occur in the learning outcomes of a particular lesson or class or school. Pervasive and widespread change in teacher education has already occurred. These changes include: raised admission criteria; more rigorous exit requirements; more student teaching experience; increased use of standardized achievement testing; and greater reliance on technology. To continue the reform, groups interested in education reform must recognize that teacher education is "nested" in colleges and universities often caught in the middle of competitive and intense pressure. Changes in teacher education must be responsive to the aspirations and needs of the profession and also be accountable to teacher education institutions. Actions for change must be consistent. The teacher induction or internship process may be the best strategy for the immediate future of teacher education. (CB)

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Panel on "TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM"

David G. Imig
August 5, 1985

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Panel on "TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM"
A Presentation to the National Conference
of State Legislatures
Seattle. Washington
August 5, 1985

At last the attention of the school reformers has turned to teacher education! When Ed Fisk, the education writer for the New York Times prophesied that teacher education would be the focal point for the third year of the reform movement, few doubted that prophesy. Nine months later it is sufficient to note that forty-nine states have enacted changes in their standards and practices for teacher education and with each of the three recent meetings of state leaders-at Philadelphia, Lake Delavan and now here in Seattle-it is certain that continuing effort will be allocated to issues and concerns affecting teacher education. In recent weeks the clamour for change in teacher education has reached new heights with calls for higher standards for entry into the profession issued by both the NEA and the AFT. In addition, at least six groups have either offered detailed recommendations for the future or convened themselves for that purpose:

(1) The Exxon Foundation funded project on school-college partnerships, chaired by John Goodlad, which seeks to improve schools of education by tying them more closely to public schools.

(2) The Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corporation funded project on improving schools of education by setting high standards, known as the Holmes Group and chaired by Judith Lanier.

(3) The Carnegie Corporation Commission on Education and the Economy Task Force on Teaching and Teacher Education which is seeking to promote changes in schools of education through professionalism.

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(4) The on-going studies by the Southern Regional Education Board of the teacher education curriculum.

(5) The NCATE Redesign which seeks to promote changes in teacher education through the establishment of more demanding standards.

(6) AACTE's National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education which made sixteen wide ranging recommendations for the improvement of teacher education.

Why all the attention? I believe that there has been a growing but begrudging recognition that better teacher education is necessary both to carry out the other reforms as well as to provide knowledge for shaping the reform agenda. (Let's not lose sight of the fact that the reformers in large measure were inspired by university professors-Sizer and Goodlad-and drew upon the effective school literature developed by a host of university-based researchers-the vast majority of whom are located in SCDEs). SCDE faculty have long realized the potency of their position but have either lacked the energy or the resources to command the attention of the public regarding the reform and revitalization of the schools. The confluence of politicians and university professors and their commitments to change and their ideas about such change have had enormous potency. Whatever the outcome of the current debate, we need to sustain that interaction and partnership.

I believe the conclusion of Boyer, Sizer and Goodlad was that without fundamental changes in the ways that teachers teach we will not experience changes in the learning outcomes of a particular lesson or class or school. Goodlad's research pointed to the dominance of "teacher talk", the reliance on the "workbook" and the teacher's inability or unfamiliarity with different pedagogical methods as constraints to real reform. Goodlad and a host of other researchers have concluded that teachers teach as they were taught for sixteen years-and despite the best efforts of contemporary teacher education programs-teachers quickly replace new instructional strategies with long imbued views about "best practice." In essence, teacher education doesn't take-and as a result is branded as too theoretical or unrealistic-which can lead to one of two conclusions:

(a) we need to mandate prescriptive regulations, or

(b) we need to strengthen it-extending programs, infusing them with research findings, giving them a greater clinical or laboratory focus, and building support systems in public schools. As we consider these alternatives, let's consider where we have focused our attention.

In recent months your mandates have given impetus to changes in teacher education. There has been pervasive and widespread change in teacher education:

(a) raised admission criteria

(b) more rigorous exit requirements

(c) more weeks of student teaching

(d) increased use of standardized achievement testing;

(e) more time being spent in "real" classrooms tutoring, observing and practicing prior to student teaching

(f) greater reliance on technology

The result is that the candidate pool is changing-on more and more campuses students actually enrolled in education are at or near the median for that particular university. With that change, other changes are occurring and anyone who contends they aren't has not been on a college campus in a long time. Let me note, however, that changes on the supply side-without corresponding changes in hiring practices, working conditions, promotion and recertification, or teacher salaries-will have little impact on the long term reform agenda. The lack of change is breeding an increasing amount of cynicism and fatalism among faculty. That is not surprising when we raise standards and others loosen standards! It is also breeding a resistence to further change-change that is absolutely necessary if teacher education is going to realize its full potential-if we are going to move from the preparation of technicians-merely skilled to follow the teacher workbook or the instructions of the teacher supervisor-to the education of professional teachers-autonomous, caring and competent professionals-MAJOR CHANGE IS NECESSARY. To do this requires much more than the mere mimicry of teaching skills in school based training programs or 80 hour training institutes. Instead, it demands the serious and deliberate study of content they wish to teach, the development of an extensive repertoire of pedagogical methods and an ability to work with peers and others in diverse environments. To accomplish this will require changes

o in the curriculum and content (indeed, the revamping of the entire program)

o in the modes of delivery (including the development of simulations and increased reliance on micro-teaching)

o in the structure of the program and the intersections between content and method.

CONCLUSION:

Given this set of conditions, what are my recommendations for this group?

(1) that you recognize that teacher education is "nested" in colleges and universities-that leaders in teacher education are caught in the middle of competing and often intense pressures:

(a) to be more responsive to the aspirations and needs of the reformers and the profession and at the same time

(b) to be accountable to the institution and its norms and mores. When you legislate changes in teacher education, recognize this tension and help teacher education leaders.

(2) that you recognize that to improve teacher education necessitates consistent action across several dimensions-piecemeal solutions that attempt to mend this or that part of the problem simply but unfortunately will not help much. Isolation of SCDEs from other reforms will not promote meaningful change which is exactly what alternative training sites or alternative certification procedures promote.

(3) that you see the induction process or .internship for the beginning teacher as the most potent investment strategy for the immediate future-as a way of achieving the educational reform goals of (a) improving PRESERV (b) reforming INSET (c) retaining beginning teachers and (d) building a valid and viable teacher performance and evaluation system. I would urge that you be imaginative in allocating money to the three partners in the enterprise-the LEA, the teacher organization and the SCDE-and then promote collaboration through cooperative planning, evaluation and action.

The challenges before us are enormous. The pervasiveness and magnitude of the teacher shortage-and, particularly, the absence of minority candidates-can deter us from major change in teacher education. We cannot afford to be deterred.

The time is right for the reform of teacher education. There is general agreement-in all of the major teacher education reform studies-of the solutions to the problems and limitations that beset us. The need is great and the time is right. Gregory Anrig recently noted that if we lose this chance by lack of will or failure to cooperate in the reform of teacher education, then we will all lose-teachers, teacher educators, policy makers, but most of all, our children. Leaders in teacher education stand ready to cooperate and lead this reform!

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